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THE COMBINATION AGAINST INTEMPERANCE

EXPLAINED AND JUSTIFIED.

AN

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE CAMBRIDGE TEMPERANCE SOCIETY,

MARCH 27th, 1832.

7588.261

BY HENRY WARE, JR.,

Professor of Pulpit Eloquence and the Pastoral Care in Harvard University.

FOURTH EDITION.

PUBLISHED BY

THE BOSTON TEMPERANCE SOCIETY.

1832.

Trans. 470 a 11 98
73.616
May 3. 1866.

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ADDRESS.

I APPEAR before you this evening in the name of the *Cambridge Temperance Society*, which now makes its first appeal to this community. I feel it a privilege to be its organ. There is no cause I could more heartily advocate; and there is no place in which I could so cheerfully do it, as in this,—the place where my early youth worshipped, and amongst my early friends. In attempting to say what may be most suitable to the occasion, I shall make it my single object to state the considerations which lead us to join in the general Combination against Intemperance, which is forming throughout the land,—I may say, throughout the world; considerations, which seem to make it the duty of every good citizen, as well as every sincere Christian, to lend his name and his influence to the cause. To this end I shall endeavor to explain the necessity of such a combination, to show its nature and character, and to point out the results at which it aims.

I. *That this combination is necessary* will appear from a slight glance at the nature and extent of the evil, the insufficiency of all previous measures for its removal, and the success which has thus far attended the present operation.

Of the nature and extent of the evil in question it cannot be needful to speak at large. They have been so fully and frequently exposed, that no one can be ignorant of them. It will be enough to refresh your minds by a rapid recapitulation.

Recollect, then, what it is to be the subject of strong drink. Contemplate the picture of some miserable man who lives in bondage to his bottle; and observe what a loathsome object he is;—squalid, bloated, diseased,—offensive in his whole appearance,—incapable of communicating happiness,—the derision of boys,—the terror and shame of his weeping, impoverished wife, —the scorn and ruin of his unhappy children,—the nuisance of his neighborhood. In a word, bring vividly before you the image of some one of those degraded creatures, of whom, alas, you have all known but too many.

Then recollect that to this beastly condition have been reduced multitudes of every class and rank in society;—not only the children of the dissolute and depraved, enticed by early example;—not only the sons of ignorance and infamy, brought up by vagabond parents to be like themselves;—but sons and daugh-

ters of the virtuous and pure, who began life in loveliness and hope, whose early promise was the pride and joy of parental affection, have been seduced, they know not how, till their loveliness and honor have faded, and their parents' hearts have been broken, and they have died like the beasts that perish.

Consider that these victims, thus corrupted and destroyed, of all ages and both sexes and every profession,—for even the senate, the bench, and the pulpit, have not escaped; mothers and daughters have been snared; the youngest children and the hoariest old men have been drawn into the fearful company; the rich and the poor, who met nowhere else, have met here; and the learned and the illiterate, the refined and the vulgar, who had no other common ground, have found one here;—consider, I say, that all these have been beguiled into it involuntarily, unintentionally, through the insidious, false pretence, that to drink a little was either indispensable for health, labor, or good fellowship, or at any rate was innocent and safe.

Recollect that the number of those, who die annually in the United States in this dreadful ruin of body and soul, has been estimated, on the most reasonable calculations, to be at least thirty thousand, or, according to others, five hundred a week, and two murders; that four fifths of all the paupers, that two thirds of all the imprisoned debtors, that more than half of all the lunatics and maniacs, that three fourths of all the criminals, are the direct, well ascertained consequence of intemperance:—that therefore we may say of the greater part of our prisons, almshouses, and lunatic asylums, they are necessary only because of the prevalent intemperance; they serve to balance the distilleries and dram-shops; and the whole burden of their expense on public and private charity, is a tax on the sober and industrious for the accommodation of the idle and profligate.

Recollect what is the amount of the entire loss to the country from this cause, as calculated from authentic data by one of the judges of the United States' Court;* an annual loss to the country, as he states it, of the enormous sum of ninety-four millions of dollars; "more than sufficient to buy up all the houses, lands, and slaves in the United States once in every twenty years."

Recollect that there is scarcely a village, in which the cost of the ardent spirits annually used, has not been more than enough to pay all the taxes, which go to support the ministry and schools and highways.

Recollect that this state of things has been perpetuated by the existence of a class of men, who thrive and grow rich on this general ruin; a class so numerous as to furnish a grog-shop for every twenty-one inhabitants, and distilleries, which, in 1815, amounted to forty thousand.

Things being in this condition, was it not necessary that *something should be done?* Was it possible that those, who dis-

*Hon. William Cranch, of Washington.

cerned the appalling extent of the evil, could be satisfied to sit still and see the devastation move on, without devising some means to stay its horrible progress? When they witnessed the debasement and wo of some miserable wretch in their own vicinity, and reflected that there was an army of such beings in the land, as numerous as that which Napoleon led to Russia; when they thought of the crowds of weeping, heart-broken friends who attended them; when they beheld the haggard company of the maniacs, the paupers, the idiots, and the criminals; and considered that the property squandered to create all this misery, exceeded in amount all that was paid for all public purposes; could they do less than say, *Something must be done?*

What should it be?—The minds of observing and Christian men were long ago agitated on this question. Inquiries were instituted, addresses were delivered, the press was made eloquent, the law was made to operate. Gradually an impression was made. There were those who understood the needlessness and mischief of all use of intoxicating liquors; and many years since, families lived, and farms were carried on, and ships were navigated without them. But the public sentiment still pleaded for a little indulgence, and for a long time the friends of temperance thought it allowable. And even after the truth became established, *that there is no hope but in total abstinence*, the reform moved slowly for want of concert. At length A COMBINATION was perceived to be the thing, and the only thing necessary. Every step had been taken but this. Every step seemed to prepare for this. This was called for; it came into action; it gathered numbers; it extended itself wide.

And what has been the result? A perceptible and almost universal change in the customs of society meets us everywhere;—in our own houses, in the social habits of our neighborhood, in the common opinion respecting what is hospitable and kind. Rum and brandy are no longer a common refreshment for friends, nor indispensable to a training, a committee meeting, or a lawsuit. The traveller through the country remarks the change everywhere; and the philanthropist and patriot speak of it in almost unmeasured terms of gratulation and joy.

It is nearly a year since it was ascertained, that through these united bands, more than a million persons had given up the use of ardent spirits; more than three thousand dealers had abandoned the traffic; more than three thousand drunkards had been known to be reformed; and more than a thousand distilleries had been stopped.* These numbers have been increased since.

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* These statements, from the Fourth Report of the American Temperance Society, are made in *round numbers*, and are probably to be taken as only an approximation to the truth.—This document is full of the most valuable statements, and ought to be in the hands of every man in the country.

From these few facts, of whose truth we may judge something from what we ourselves have witnessed, it may be perceived what efficiency there is in the present movement, what assurance that we are in the right course, and what encouragement to persevere.

All this goes to prove incontestably my first position, that this combination is necessary. Every thing else had been tried. For twenty years, men of every class,—statesmen, lawyers, laborers, physicians, and divines,—had been acting on the subject, and individuals in every part of the land had experimentally settled every important principle which is now acted upon. But for want of concentration their efforts and example were of limited effect. It was needful to unite them. This has been partially done, and the consequences prove it to be a wise measure. Let it be done completely; let the sober friends of man join together in one band, and act with one mind; and nothing can stand against them.

II. But before they will do this, it is necessary that they understand *the nature of this combination.* Are the terms of it such as they can reasonably assent to?

It is not to be concealed, that many excellent persons object, in the outset, against the very principle of association, as being of questionable propriety and expediency, to say the least, and attended with hazards so momentous as to make it their duty to withhold their countenance from them. I do not mean to argue with such persons. I address only those who think differently; who think that in this, as in many other cases of moral duty, some perils must be hazarded for the sake of a great and unquestionable good. In the present instance, the benefits are too vast, the efficacy too certain, the operation too imperiously demanded, to allow a moment's hesitation. All the attendant evil becomes theoretical and trivial by the side of the palpable and inestimable good.

What then are the terms of the present combination?

The principle, on which it is grounded, is that of total abstinence from the use of ardent spirits, to which it requires that the members of the association bind themselves by express agreement. Here then are two things; the *principle* and the *pledge.* Is there reasonable objection to either?

To the *principle* there certainly can be none. No one, who knows any thing of the nature of the evil in question, will dream of finding a remedy in any thing short of the absolute prohibition of the intoxicating article. All experience proves, that no man can be accounted safe who allows himself to drink moderately. Dr. Johnson once said, "I know what *intemperance* is, and I know what is *abstinence;* but I never yet could learn what is *moderation.*" Thousands may say the same. They can abstain; but they cannot drink moderately. In abstinence there is no difficulty, comparatively no self-denial, and there is safety. But to drink a little, and stop as soon as the appetite is provoked;

to deny an increasing gratification to a growing thirst; this is, for many men, too hard; and to all it is fearfully dangerous. There is no safety but in resolute abstinence. What objection then can there be to the Principle? Especially since it is one of the demonstrated truths, that not a drop is *needed* by any man in any circumstances, and that in most cases it is actually deleterious. How indeed should it be necessary, when the world went on till within three hundred years without the invention of ardent spirit? and its use is said to have been common in New England less than ninety years.

But it is not only this personal consideration which justifies the principle. Every man must recollect his relation to others. However impossible that he himself should fall, he must consider, that it may be essential to the very salvation of some weaker neighbor that he altogether abstain. But he sees you take *a little*. Why should not he? It is as innocent in him as in you; and he is ashamed to betray a greater distrust of his own virtue than you of yours. If you risk it, he will; if you brave the devil, he will not be so cowardly as to retreat. Shall he alone turn poltroon, and run away from a seasonable glass? Not he; and so, for fear of being thought to think himself in danger, he drinks on and dies. Now, what right had you to countenance and abet the ruin of that man? What right had you, by a foolish and unnecessary gratification, to tempt him to sin and destruction? Remember the magnanimous declaration of Paul: "If meat cause my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth, lest I cause my brother to offend." This should be the maxim of every man; and there can be no doubt, that if the strong would all act on this principle, they would confirm the moral courage and strengthen the moral efforts of thousands, who would otherwise be lost. For how many thousands are there, who have no strength to run counter to example!

Indeed it will not do to give up this principle of entire abstinence. It is the corner-stone of the cause. On it rests all the success in which we rejoice. Abandon it,—allow men to drink moderately, and to judge for themselves, as you must, what is moderate drinking, and you restore the dominion of the demon at once.

But the *pledge*,—is that necessary? is that expedient?

On this point, I am aware, there is greater difference of opinion. Many of the true friends to the cause, advocates of the great Principle, hesitate about the Pledge. I know their objections, conscientiously and religiously entertained. They are to be treated with all respect. But after the most careful consideration I have been able to give the subject, I am constrained to say, that I think them founded in error, and such as offer no sufficient reason for refusing to join the combination.

The error seems to me twofold: first, in supposing that the pledge is always designed for his sake who takes it, whereas it is often intended chiefly for the sake of others; and, secondly

in fancying that it contains a snare to his conscience by inducing him to act from unworthy motives.

First, these persons say, We do not use these injurious articles. Why is not this enough? Why pledge ourselves to that restraint which we already practise?

I answer, For the sake of others, for the sake of extending the knowledge and influence of your example. There is a large class of men almost persuaded, who think that, on the whole, it would be better to abandon the cup altogether; who yet continue to drink habitually, though soberly, (and thus encourage the intemperate) because they are not called to make an immediate decision. Your private example does not urge them to it any more to-day than next year; and they think that next year will be more convenient. But when you sign a paper, and pass it to them, they are brought to a decision on the spot. And it is precisely in this way, that thousands, without a moment's hesitation, have been made practical advocates of the cause. They were advocates *at heart* before; yet they might never have become such openly, so as to exert a wholesome influence, except they had thus been called on for an immediate decision. In this way, therefore, your written engagement may make your practice known to many, and thus tend to influence many, who never would otherwise have learned what your practice is.

But again they say, We lay snares for conscience in thus surrendering our liberty. We do not think a little occasional indulgence injurious to us, though we do not desire it; and why should we tempt ourselves by the prohibition?

It is not strange that some should be affected by this mode of viewing the matter. They religiously dread to tamper with conscience, and put its delicacy in jeopardy. But, after all, are they not mistaken as to the amount of the risk? If they are accustomed to act on principle, is there much danger that appetite or civility will get ascendency over it, because they have *told their neighbors* that it shall not?—for this is the amount of it. Or, suppose it amounted to something more; yet should they not be ready to incur the risk for the sake of the good which they may thus do to others? for this is the point to be considered. It is a question between a single regard to one's own good, and a benevolent sacrifice to the good of others. On the one side is a possible evil to one's self; on the other, an inevitable evil to others. Which is to be chosen? To a conscientious man, who walks circumspectly, the personal danger is nothing; and he certainly cannot feel justified in refusing to do what might prove an essential office of benevolence, on the selfish plea that possibly he might thereby injure his own mind. The duty then seems obvious. It is determined by the maxim of holy writ, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's good;" and by that already cited; "I will eat no meat while the world standeth, lest I cause my brother to offend."

I would ask also, why this objection should be thought so

peculiarly strong in this case, when it is equally applicable to many other occasions, on which it is never brought forward? "We are principled against making promises to do our duty; we choose to do it because it is our duty; otherwise we set snares for our consciences." But you do not act on this principle in other cases. It is your duty to speak the truth in a court of justice; yet you make a solemn engagement to do so. It is your duty to pay your debts; yet you do not hesitate to give a note of hand, promising payment. It is your duty to be faithful to your wife; yet you did not refuse, when you took her for better for worse, to engage to be so. And did you ever find yourself less likely to speak the truth, pay your debts, and honor your wife, because of these promises? Have you found them snares to your conscience? Certainly then there is no force in the objection. It cannot stand before a candid examination.

It is to be said further, in defence of this requisition, that experience has proved it essential to the prevalence of the cause; we can expect its complete triumph only through the power, which is by this means imparted to its operations. It is undoubtedly a fact, that the vigorous and rapid spread of just sentiments on this subject has been mainly owing to their having been pressed upon the notice of society by the steady and persevering pledge of temperate men. It is through this means, that such multitudes have been led, not only to reflect, but to act, to act promptly, decidedly, fearlessly, unitedly; and if the former course of simply reasoning on the subject, and acting silently as insulated individuals, had been continued, nothing approaching the same results could have been witnessed, nor could we now look forward with so confident assurance to complete success. Whatever objection, therefore, may seem to lie against this part of the system, a little examination shows it to be unfounded; while to admit it in practice would be ruinous to the enterprise. No; so long as we require our magistrates to bind themselves to fidelity in office, we must not think it unreasonable to bind ourselves to this duty. If every sober man would do it, not all the obligation, assumed and discharged by the officers of state, would effect so much for the virtue and prosperity of the nation. We should then speedily witness the results at which we aim.

III. *What are these results?* This was the third point I proposed to consider.

The result to which these operations tend is the extermination, —the absolute, perpetual extermination,—of ardent spirits, as an article of drink. The cause is not gained until rum and brandy are as little used as opium, and sold in the same way, for the same purposes, and in the same places. There is no stopping short of this. Our principles look forward to this result. The work is incomplete, society is insecure, until it is reached.

It is obvious, therefore, that the principles of this combination go *to discourage the manufacture of spirits, and abolish the traffic in them.* He who holds them cannot consistently supply to his

fellow men the temptations and facilities to that indulgence, which he professes to esteem the source of immeasurable calamities to them. He cannot consistently labor to rid the land of intemperance, and yet make it for his own interest that men should buy at his distillery, or drink at his shop.

I am aware of the delicacy of this part of the subject. I know the risk I run of hurting the feelings of men engaged in a business, which was, when they entered it, and always hitherto has been, considered as reputable as any other; and who have not yet had the subject so presented to them, that they perceive themselves to be occupied in spreading misery and desolation around them. All their habits of education and of life, their business, their interest, and their connexions, concur to blind them, and they are not likely to discern, so readily as others, the inherent vice of their vocation. Even John Newton, for sometime after his character became Christian, failed to see, that his employment in the slave-trade was in contradiction to his religious principles; and it sounds harshly to the ears of our neighbors, when it is said to them, for the first time, that the trade in rum is no better than the trade in men. Yet if we judge impartially, by the wretchedness and sin resulting from each, can we doubt that it is so?

I desire, therefore, to speak inoffensively, but I must speak decidedly. No proposition seems to me susceptible of more satisfactory demonstration than this,—and I am sure that no person can give it one hour's serious thought without assenting to it,—that, in the present state of information on this subject, no man can think to act on Christian principle, or do a patriot's duty to his country, and at the same time make or sell the instrument of intoxication.

For let him consider what it amounts to. To no less than this: employing his time, capital, and industry, to prepare for use, and offer for use, that thing, which has been proved to be the principal source of misery and crime in modern society;—providing for men the convenient and tempting means of ruining their health and their business, beggaring their families, becoming vagabonds and a nuisance while alive, sinking prematurely to a dishonorable grave, and entering eternity,—oh, with what a preparation! Let him consider this,—and he will perceive, that, however little he may have intended it, however little he may have thought of it, the nature of his calling has rendered it inevitable. He cannot be a dealer in spirits without becoming accessory to all this vice and ruin.

He does not wish to create drunkards; he does not take pleasure in multiplying poverty, suffering, and sin; he is astonished that men can be such idiots and brutes; he wonders that they do not drink with moderation. Alas! he does not reflect that the inevitable tendency of the shop and the bar-room is to decoy men from themselves and their self-command. He does not reflect how hopeless it is,—as all experience has proved,—that

such places should exist, and no men become intemperate. Their existence is certainly the occasion, if not the cause, of a vast proportion of the evil. If the poison were not freely offered for sale, it would not be purchased.

This is easily tested. How happens it that in that village there were so many neglected farms, and houses going to decay; that so many families lived in squalidness and quarrelling, and that a general want of enterprise marked its slovenly aspect? There were four places in that village, at which strong drink was retailed; and it was the custom of the villagers to assemble there and discuss the times. As a natural consequence, they became idle, shiftless, slovenly, and quarrelsome. Now suppose, that twenty years ago the town had resolved, that no retailers should be allowed there,—as has recently been done in Utica, N. Y.;—that, consequently, no spirits had, since that time, been carried there for sale. Who can deny, that the whole aspect of things would be other than it is? Who does not see, that the very persons who are now worthless sots, would have grown up a thriving, industrious population? This is the result which we wish to see accomplished throughout the community. It has already been witnessed in some places, where words have hardly power enough to express the gratitude and gladness of the people at the happy change. What hinders that the change should take place everywhere? What hinders that every community should be filled only with sober, thrifty, enterprising men, helping forward, instead of keeping back the general good? What hinders? Every one must see the answer to be, *the manufacture and the sale of ardent spirit.* Turn the matter as we will, it comes to this at last. And until those who are most concerned in the fact see it in its true light, and become willing to sacrifice a brief present gain to the welfare of the community, the day of universal temperance with its train of blessings will be retarded in its coming. *They* must first lock up,—for they hold the keys,—the fountains of that desolating flood which now overflows and stagnates upon the corrupted land.

Honored be they who have done this! Honor to the names of those,—the only persons in any sense *sufferers* in this cause,—who have, with manly principle and conscientious self-denial, thrown away their gains, that their fellow men might be safe. They already form a numerous host; every day witnesses accessions to their ranks. They are now, and from this time forth they must be, the most efficient promoters of the auspicious reformation; since each of them, not only, like the rest of us, refuses to touch the poison as it flows, but absolutely annihilates one of its streams. To these men it belongs to finish the work which others have so propitiously begun.

I have thus executed my purpose of explaining the necessity, the character, and the results of the great combination against Intemperance, in which we have enlisted.

I have but a word more to say. I simply ask of you, friends and fellow citizens, to give the subject a fair consideration; and if, as reasonable men, as citizens, as patriots, as Christians. you feel the evil and desire its extinction, lend the power of your names to the enterprise; enlist in this crusade against the general destroyer; array yourselves under the banner of your country and your God, in this holy war of extermination against the chief public enemy. The victory will be won,—the most important and blessed victory since the Reformation of Luther,—only when every individual shall have joined our ranks, and become a free, voluntary, practical advocate of the duty of absolute abstinence. Much has been done already; enough to give encouragement to the most sanguine hopes; but comparatively nothing, if the effort is to be relaxed. Every thing depends on perseverance. Come up, therefore, one and all, "to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Come up, and aid in the purification and salvation of your country. The newly Christianized islands of the Pacific ocean have abolished the trade, and banished the venom from their shores. Let not our older land of boasted religious light, lag far behind. Let it rise in the power of its enlightened faith, in the fervor of its Christian love, and sweep this foul contamination from its borders. Formerly it was thought that we must rely on the *laws* to effect the Augean work. But it has been found, that there is something stronger and more to be depended on than human law,—the spread of just sentiment and upright principle. No law has a commanding power like that "written on the heart." Where this is brought into operation, aided by the authority and sanctions of the written word of God, it creates a certainty, energy, and perseverance of action, to which all other operation is feeble. Here then is our confidence. The reformation which proceeds on *principle*, is a reformation root and branch; a willing, cheerful, thorough, universal reformation; and it never goes backward. Let us therefore earnestly pray, and strenuously labor, for the spread of that moral and religious Principle, which shall certainly effect, and alone is able to effect, this moral and religious Reform.

4th edition, 10,000 copies.